Criticisms of *sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* and *saṁskāra-dīpikā* — a discussion.

by Hari Pārṣada Dāsa

Author's Note: This document is my attempt to write down a non-provocative response to the following blog post:

http://madangopal.blogspot.in/2014/08/sat-kriya-sara-dipika-and-samskara.html

A copy of this blog post can also be found at:

https://archive.org/details/madangopal_sksd

The questions in this dialogue have been taken from the blog post. A copy of this document can be downloaded from:

https://archive.org/details/sksd_criticisms

Question) I have some serious doubts regarding the authorship of the books *sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* and *saṁskāra-dīpikā*. These two are never mentioned by anyone as being his works nor have they been quoted by any of the Goswamis. I doubt if they were written by Srila Gopala Bhatta Goswami.

Answer) Whether they were written by him or not will be extremely difficult for anyone to figure out. There is a good reason why I say this. Srila Gopala Bhatta Goswami maintained in his library many miscellaneous notes regarding many subjects and not all of them were very organized. Srila Jiva Goswami confirms this in his *Tattva-sandarbha*[1] (5) as follows,

krāntaṁ vyutkrānta-khaṇḍitam

"Some of his [Srila Gopala Bhatta Goswami's] notes were in perfect order, some were out of order and some were incomplete."

Thus it is very much possible that someone organized his notes on the topic of *sat-kriyās* and *saṁskāras* and gave it a title, and maintained the name of the original author.

Question) I still suspect that this is the case. It seems that the Gaudiya Math was the first one to publish this work. This work has a distinct *Gauḍīya Maṭha* flavor, so I would not be surprised if some senior *Gauḍīya Maṭha* devotee, perhaps even its founder, is the actual author of this booklet.

Answer) Well before coming to any conclusions, I think it would be better to perform a good background check. It is never recommended to start some research with the end conclusion in mind. If we look up the list of manuscripts preserved at the Vrindavan

Research Institute, we find that they have a manuscript of *sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* with them. Here is a screen grab from the Vrindavan Research Institute Catalogue[2], Part 1

1		2	4	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Serial No	Subject	Accession No	Title of work	Name of Author	Nature of Commentator	Material	Script	Size in cms, Folios Lines per page Letters per line	Extent	Condition and Age
138	"	1386	Satkriyāsāradipikā	Gopālabhaṭṭa Gosvāmi	P	B	32×13.5 30; 20, 65	C		Fair

Now, the manuscript is complete (indicated by the letter 'C') and is in fair condition and written in Bengali script. Now if a manuscript already exists in Vrindavan and the Gaudiya Math edition was printed far away in Bengal, how can it be that the Gaudiya Math made up the book? Could it have been that someone from the Gaudiya Math took the manuscript from Vrindavan Research Institute and printed it? That too is not possible because the Vrindavan Research Institute was formed many decades after the book was first published.

Question) Well that's not all. In the third chapter of the text, the author of *Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* recommends the worship of Gopal Bhatta Goswami in the *vaiṣṇava-homa*, "***oṁ gopāla bhaṭṭāya svāhā***". Gopal Bhatta Goswami was so humble that he did not want his name mentioned in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, so it would be a total contradiction if he would prescribe worship of himself in a book he wrote.

Answer) If praises to the author, prayers and appearance of names is what disqualifies a book from being genuine, the first book which should be critically examined is the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* of Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami. In the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*[3], the following verses are found,

bhakter vilāsāṁś cinute prabodhā-
nandasya śiṣyo bhagavat-priyasya
gopāla-bhaṭṭo raghunātha-dāsaṁ
santoṣayan rūpa-sanātanau ca

mathurā-nātha-pādābja-
prema-bhakti-vilāsataḥ
jātaṁ bhakti-vilāsākhyaṁ
tad-bhaktāḥ śīlayantv imam

"This book *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* is composed by Sri Gopal Bhatta Goswami — the disciple of the dear devotee of the Lord named Sri Prabodhananda. It is composed for the pleasure of Srila Rupa Goswami, Srila Sanatana Goswami and Srila Raghunath Das Goswami.

Due to his (Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami's) loving devotion at the lotus feet of Lord Mathuranath (Krishna), this book has appeared. Devotees of the Lord, kindly follow it!" (***Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 1.2 – 3**)

Now, does it mean that Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami wrote his own name and praise in these verses? Does it mean that the current editions of *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* that we have are spurious? Certainly not! These verses may have been inserted by a scribe, and scribes usually add credit wherever it is due. The same may have happened with *sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā*. Only after seeing the manuscript can anything conclusive be said.

Question) Worship of the *Pañca-tattva* and *Madhvācārya*, which is nowhere prescribed in the Goswami's books, is recommended (*Saṁskāra Dīpika* Verse 30).

Answer) As I said previously, scribes usually add details to a manuscript in order to make it clearer to future generations of readers. Following is the list of worshipable names given in the *Saṁskāra-dīpikā*[4],

śrī-kṛṣṇa-brahma-devarṣi-bādarāyaṇa-saṁjñakān
śrī-mādhva-śrī-padmanābha-śrīman-narahari-mādhavān
akṣobhya-jayatīrtha-jñānasindhu-dayānidhīn
śrī-vidyānidhi-rājendra-jayadharmān kramād vayam
puruṣottama-brahmaṇya-vyāsatīrthāṁś ca saṁstumaḥ
tato lakṣmīpatiṁ mādhavendraṁ ca bhaktitaḥ
tac-chiṣyān śrīśvarādvaita-nityānandān jagad-gurūn
devam īśvara-śiṣyaṁ śrī-caitanyaṁ ca bhajāmahe
śrī-kṛṣṇa-prema-dānena yena nistāritaṁ jagat
devaḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nityānandaṁ jagad-guruṁ
śrīlādvaitaṁ gadādharaṁ śrīvāsaṁ bhakta-varyakam
śrī-guruṁ pūjayitvā ca gaurāṅga-pārṣadāṁs tataḥ
saṁskārān kārayet bālān yathā-yogyaṁ samantataḥ

The names of the *ācāryas* given are not even of a specific branch of Gaudiya Vaishnavism or of a particular institution. The names are only till Lord Chaitanya and most of them seem to have been taken by the scribe of the manuscript from the *Prameya-ratnāvalī* of Srila Baladeva Vidyabhushan. The concept of *pañca-tattva* is already there in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

In a book like *Saṁskāra-dīpikā*, it is not possible for the author (Srila Gopala Bhatta Goswami) to write down the *paramparā* list for all branches. Therefore, a general instruction is given after Verse 31 as follows,

tatra tāvat praṇava-śiraska-tat-tan-nāmaḥ caturthy-anta-mantreṇādau sarvādīn pūjayet

"Therefore in the beginning, one should chant the names of all the gurus by prefixing 'oṁ' in front of their names and ending it with the dative declension [for example if the guru's name is Krishna-dāsa, then one should chant — *oṁ kṛṣṇa-dāsāya namaḥ*]".

Thus there is a possibility that the scribe of the manuscript has inserted the verse from the *prameya-ratnāvalī* in order to make it clear as to exactly what *paramparā* the *Saṁskāra-dīpikā* is talking about.

Question) Isn't it true that new additions/explanations/footnotes like these make a book non-bonafide?

Answer) Not necessarily. The unfortunate mindset that — 'any explanation added to the books of the Goswamis is non-bonafide' enters into our minds and disallows anyone from the *sampradāya* to give a good explanation of any subject matter. It also prevents the *sampradāya* from producing new *vaiṣṇava* authors of good caliber. As I have shown above, two verses in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* are certainly penned by the scribe. Does that make the entire book non-bonafide, or does it help us understand who the author of the book was?

Of course, it would be most appropriate for us to say that scribes should have been more careful to distinguish their additions from the original work while inserting footnotes in the manuscripts, but the traditional Indian mindset has never been to doubt something just because the scribe added an explanation. Even if a scribe has added some detail, the importance of that detail should be seen instead of the act of addition. Every addition need not be a forgery. The famous poet *Kālidāsa* captures this mood very well in one of his compositions,

purāṇam ity eva na sādhu sarvaṁ
na cāpi kāvyaṁ navam ity avadyam
santaḥ parīkṣyānyatarad bhajante
mūḍhaḥ para-pratyayaneya-buddhiḥ

"Just because a composition is old does not mean that it is automatically bona-fide. Neither are new compositions non-bonafide simply because they're new. Saintly souls examine everything in the light of its utility and accept it whereas fools only depend on the opinions of others." (***Mālavikāgnimitra-kāvyaṁ***[5], Verse 2)

Question) This book also has the '*gopībhāvāśraya*' *sannyāsa-mantra* (*Saṁskāra Dīpika* 40), which is also not found anywhere in the Goswami's books.

Answer) There are many mantras which are not there in the Goswami's books. Here is one example,

'gaura-gopāla mantra' tomāra cāri akṣara
aviśvāsa chāḍa, yei kariyācha antara

You are chanting the *Gaura-gopāla* mantra, composed of four syllables. Now please give up the doubts that have resided within you. (***Caitanya-caritāmṛta***[6]***, Antya*** 2.31)

Now nowhere in the Goswami's books is the *gaura-gopāla* mantra given. Does it mean that someone has spuriously added this *pāyā* to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*? I am not sure as to why every mantra has to be mentioned by the Goswamis for it to become bona-fide. Are mantras not supposed to be dependent on the will of the Lord? Even if a mantra is not mentioned in a book by a specific authority, but if the properly received mantra is prefixed with the syllable

'oṁ' and chanted repeatedly, it has the capacity to give the object of desire to the chanter. This is the opinion of the great sage Patañjalī,

taj-japaḥ tad-artha-bhāvanam

"By chanting it repeatedly one acquires the desired contemplation." (***Yoga-sūtra***[7] 1.28)

Question) The same paragraph carries the text '***kutsitaṁ malinaṁ vāso varjanīyaṁ viśeṣataḥ kaṣāya-rahitaṁ vastraṁ***', "Ugly and dirty clothes and clothes which are not saffron are to be given up", but *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (4.147) says ***nagno rakta paṭaḥ*** "For a *vaiṣṇava*, wearing red cloth is like being naked." Although that is said in the context of *arcanā*, it is a general statement because a *pūjārī* does not change the color of his cloth when he gets off the altar. Saffron should not be worn by a *vaiṣṇava*, on or off the altar. Saffron should not be worn by a Vaiṣṇava, on or off the altar – ***rakta vastra vaiṣṇavera poḍte nā yuwāy*** (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya* 13.61). *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* also states: ***śukla-vāso bhaven nityaṁ raktaṁ caiva vivarjayet*** (4.152) "The *vaiṣṇava* should always wear white cloth and give up red cloth."

Answer) Well I am surprised to see that two contradictory statements by the same *ācārya* have started disturbing us *vaiṣṇavas*. Srila Rupa Goswami has clearly told us that,

virodho vākyayor yatra
nāprāmāṇyaṁ tad iṣyate
yathāviruddhatā ca syāt
tathārthaḥ kalpyate tayoḥ

"Two contradictory statements in scriptures do not invalidate each other. Instead, one should find out a way by which the contradiction will be resolved." (***Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta***[8] 5.327)

The difference of opinions have arisen here because the rules (*vidhis*) given in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* are meant for *gṛhasthas* whereas the statements given in the *Saṁskāra-dīpikā* are written for a *sannyāsī*. The *adhikārīs* (audience) for both statements are different. Srila Sanatana Goswami says clearly that the rules described in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* are for *gṛhasthas* only. When the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* starts describing the various rules in the 3rd *vilāsa*, Srila Sanatana Goswami makes the following comment,

atra ca prāyo gṛhasthasyaiva lekhya-śrī-bhagavat-pūjā-vidhi-yogyatvāt tasyaivāyam ācāro jñeyaḥ. ata eva śrī-viṣṇu-purāṇādy-uktāni prāyo gṛhi-dharma-vacanāny eva likhitānīti dik.

"Since a *gṛhastha* is the ideal candidate for worshipping the Lord according to the rules of the scriptures, this book and its rules are to be mostly applicable to the *gṛhasthas* only. Therefore, usually the proofs will be taken from the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* (since it has many rules applicable for the *gṛhasthas*)." — (**Srila Sanatana Goswami's Commentary on *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*** 3.156)

The *gṛhastha* is forbidden to wear saffron or red colors, and that is a fact applicable in all *Gaudiya-vaiṣṇava* institutions. Understanding it in this way does not cause any controversy.

The *saṁskāra-dīpikā* on the other hand is for the *sannyāsīs*. That is the reason why an apparent contradiction of statements is found.

Another reason why *rakta* (deep red) cloth is not worn by *vaiṣṇavas* is because traditionally, the worshippers of *śakti* wear the deep reddish cloth.

rakta-gandhāmbaraḥ sragvī rakta-bhūṣādi-bhūṣitaḥ

"The worshipper of *śaktī* should decorate oneself with red sandalwood paste, red flowers, red cloth and other reddish paraphernalia." (***Tantrarāja-tantra***[9], 5.19)

Therefore, the *vaiṣṇavas* in the *gṛhastha-āśrama* do not wear the deep red (*rakta*) cloth. Nor do they wear the mild saffron (*kāṣāya*) because they have not taken to the *sannyāsa* order.

Question) Despite this, I am personally convinced these are not works of any Gopal Bhatta Goswami, for the following reasons -

Samskāra Dīpikā contains modern Bengali words like *bhek*, Bengali for *veśa* or *sannyāsa*, but meaning 'frog' in Sanskrit (*Saṁskāra Dīpikā* 21 – *guruṇā data bahirvāsavād bhekāṅga-bhūta cīra-khaṇḍa-yugma*, and *bheka-dhāriṇām tu*.

Answer) Well if the manuscript found in Vrindavan and currently present in the Vrindavan Research Institute says that it is by Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami and the manuscript found in Bengal used by the Gaudiya Matha also says that it is by Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami, then I think the matter should be taken up with the Vrindavan Research Institute and copies of the manuscript should be secured to understand who has written what.

The word '***bhek***' is certainly a Bengali word and might have appeared in the manuscript and in the book too. This can be due to a mistake by the scribe. In various manuscripts, scribes who copy the original text can end up making various mistakes. One classic example is the ***Kāśikā-vṛtti***[10] on *Pāṇini's sūtra* 1.3.36 (*sammānanotsañjan.....*) where the scribes have accidentally written the word '*cārvakaḥ*' as '*cārvī*'. This however, does not make the entire book susceptible. The term '***bhek***' is not exclusive to Gaudiya Math or any specific institution. Nor does the Gaudiya Math have anything to gain by replacing a Sanskrit word with a Bengali one on purpose. It may simply have been the mistake of a scribe.

Question) *Sat Kriyā Sāra Dīpikā* states early on, in text two, that included in *gṛhi brāhmaṇas* (householder *brāhmaṇas*) are anyone of any caste, if initiated by a sat-guru – such a statement also has a distinct Gauḍīya Maṭh-flavor, so I would not be surprised if some senior Gauḍīya Maṭh devotee, perhaps even its founder, is the actual author of this booklet, and in the same paragraph (*Saṁskāra-dīpikā* 30) is the sentence ***vaiṣṇavatvena dvijatva siddheḥ***,

"being a Vaiṣṇava makes one a dvija", which is as *Gauḍīya Maṭh-ish* as coals are from Newcastle.

Statements like ***idānīṁ sākṣād brāhmaṇācāra bhraṣṭatvāt caṇḍālavad bhavatīti*** ("due to being fallen from direct brahminical conduct he is a dog-eater") show a '*brahmin*-friendly' *bhāva* so typical of the *Gauḍīya Maṭha*.

Answer) Well there are similar statements having contempt for the caste *brāhmaṇas* in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*[11] (*Ādi* 16.300 – 301) too,

kali-yuge rākṣasa-sakala vipra-ghare
janmibeka sujanera hiṁsā karibāre

"In *Kali-yuga*, demons are born in the families of *brāhmaṇas* in order to harass the saintly persons."

rākṣasāḥ kalim āśritya
jāyante brahma-yoniṣu
utpannā brāhmaṇa-kule
bādhante śrotriyān kṛśān

"In *Kali-yuga*, demons will take birth in the families of *brāhmaṇas* to harass those rare persons who are conversant with the Vedic way of life."

So does it mean that Srila Vrindavan Das Thakura is now blindly supporting the Gaudiya Math agenda? That a *brāhmaṇa* falls down immediately on performing an abominable activity is not only the statement of the Gaudiya Math. Please see the following commentary by Sri Mukunda Goswami — the commentator on the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*,

vaidharmye brāhmaṇasya surāpāne sadyaḥ pātityavan nāticitram idam

"On breaking the rules of *dharma* such as drinking liquor, a *brāhmaṇa* falls immediately. Nothing surprising about it!" (***Sri Mukunda Goswami's Commentary on Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu***[12] 1.1.21)

The Gaudiya Math has highlighted a few socio-cultural aspects from the books of the *ācāryas* in their preaching and they have every right to do so. Those who do not believe in them are free to publish books explaining their side of the story.

Question) In the upanayana-chapter, paragraph one, it is said *ṣoḍaśa varṣa paryantam upanayanādhikāraḥ ataḥ paraṁ sāvitrī patito brāhmaṇo nopanetara* – A *brāhmaṇa* can get the upanayana (thread-ceremony) until the age of sixteen, if he does not receive it by then he is called fallen from sāvitrī and cannot receive the Brahmin-thread anymore."
Makes me wonder how 40-year old western hippies can receive it then?

Answer) Technically speaking if the Gaudiya Math really wanted to convince everyone, they could have removed this paragraph which speaks against the eligibility of persons greater than 16. The fact that they maintained this from the original manuscript shows that a good degree of intellectual honesty was followed in preparing the book. Even in other places, the *Saṁskāra-dīpikā* exhibits a few *siddhāntas* which may not have been very favorable to the preaching of the Gaudiya Math. However, no editing is done and those sections too are included as it is.

Speaking strictly from a *smārta* point of view, one who doesn't get initiated into the sacred thread by 16 (or 24 for *vaiśyas*) is known as a *vrātya*. There are some *prāyaścittas* offered to allow them to have the sacred thread. Since it is not feasible to give all the details in this document, I will not speak more on this. Entire books have been written on that subject matter. If someone is interested in the details, I will be glad to provide them separately.

However, the main reason why *vaiṣṇavas* have no restrictions in this regard is because the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* says so. It is said there that,

ato niṣedhakaṁ yad yad
vacanaṁ śrūyate sphuṭam
avaiṣṇava-paraṁ tat tad
vijñeyaṁ tattva-darśibhiḥ

Therefore, wherever restrictive statements are to be found in scriptures [regarding śūdras or women], those statements are understood by the learned souls as applicable to non-vaiṣṇavas only. (***Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*** 5.453)

Question) Later the concept of *mantravān pāñcarātrika brāhmaṇa* (a *brāhmaṇa* with *pāñcarātrika mantra-dīkṣā* according to the translator) appears in the book. ***Pāñcarātrika*** is also a typical *Gauḍīya Maṭh* concept which is nowhere mentioned in the *Haribhakti Vilāsa*, adding to the suspicion that these booklets are a *Gauḍīya Māth* product only.

Answer) To put it in very mild words, this is a false allegation because if you're speaking of the word '*pāñcarātrika*', it is mentioned in ***Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*** 5.291. The word '*pāñcarātrikaiḥ*' (a declension of the word '*pāñcarātrika*') appears there.

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